

Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission

2005 Consumer Satisfaction Study

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Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission
Research, Evaluation, & Development Department

SRC Subcommittee Membership 2005

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- MRC received 1209 valid responses to the Consumer Satisfaction Survey in 2005 for a 25% response rate. This represents an excellent rate of return for a mailed survey. It is evident that there is great deal of interest on the part of MRC Consumers to provide the Commission with input on their satisfaction. The Consumer Satisfaction Survey is a viable part of MRC's Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) process.
- Both the overall Response Rate and overall Satisfaction rates increased from 2004 to 2005, representing a trend or a pattern of improvement.
- The 2005 survey respondents were disproportionately from Status 26- consumers whose cases were closed successfully after receiving services. However, the data from cases closed in Status 28- consumers who did not have a successful outcome, pulled down the average satisfaction scores. This trend was also noted in the 2004 Consumer Satisfaction Survey.
- Respondents came equally from each region and represented each MRC Area Office throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The proportion of respondents in each Area Office were relative to the size of the office.
- The most significant improvement in satisfaction was in the area of Self-Discovery, a consumer's ability to learn more about his/her skills, preferences and needs. Average satisfaction scores increased from 66.9% in 2004 to 71.2% in 2005. The proportion of respondents who believed MRC had met or exceeded their expectations also increased from 76.6% in 2004 to 80.6% in 2005.
- Dissatisfaction with the waiting period to obtain services was reflected in the closed and open ended questions, even though the waiting period was reduced from 4 months to 3 months in 2005. However some consumers were also dissatisfied with waiting for services after their case was opened. Their dissatisfaction could be related to either or both situations.
- Over 90% of the successfully closed cases (status 26) were employed or in school at the time of the survey, as compared to only 34% of the unsuccessfully closed cases (status 28).
- MRC did not meet some consumer's expectations in 2005. Most often, these consumers wanted additional job training, education, or employment services that accommodated their needs, interests, and skills. These services were needed to obtain employment opportunities with competitive compensation and benefits packages. MRC is in the process of conducting a needs survey to further analyze the needs of MRC Consumers.
- Once again, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors are the greatest source of satisfaction. Their respect, understanding, and support are what continue to make MRC special in the eyes of Consumers. This finding substantiates that MRC Counselors are providing a quality service.

INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the 1973 Rehabilitation Act, as amended, and federal regulations administered by the Rehabilitation Services Administration, the Massachusetts State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is mandated to conduct an annual survey of consumer satisfaction. In the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, this is a consumer-led, cooperative effort between MRC staff and consumers on the SRC Subcommittee for Consumer Satisfaction.

This collaborative Consumer Satisfaction initiative resulted in the design of the survey questionnaire and research methodology. This process produced a mailed questionnaire survey, data entry form, database, analysis of the results, and preparation of this final report. It is noteworthy, that the MRC Consumer Involvement Program's Individual Consumer Consultant (ICC) did an excellent job accurately entering the data into the Consumer Satisfaction Database in a timely fashion facilitating the preparation of this document.

The Consumer Satisfaction Subcommittee adopted the continuous survey methodology in 2004. In Federal Fiscal Year 2005 (10/1/04 to 09/30/05) surveys were sent to all consumers whose cases were closed successfully (achieving an employment outcome) in status 26 or unsuccessfully (did not achieve an employment outcome) in status 28, no more than 2 ½ weeks after closure. This methodology was adopted to ensure that every MRC Consumer who received services and had a closed case during the year had the opportunity to provide MRC with input. This method has proven to be an effective quality improvement strategy.

In 2005, the survey response rate was 25.1%, a better than average return rate, especially for mailed surveys with no follow up to non-responders. The proportion of undeliverable surveys continues to decrease. This method maximizes use of computer technology to ensure cost effectiveness. This is a sound methodology that affords good statewide coverage. Approximately one third of respondents come from each geographic region and at least a small percentage come from each Area Office.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The Consumer Satisfaction sub-committee, with SRC approval, adopted a continuous survey methodology in 2004. All closed status 26 and 28 cases in the MRCIS (MRC Electronic Case Management System) are collected into an ACCESS database that generates personalized letters and surveys for each consumer. This automated continuous

quality improvement process maximizes our computer technology which in turn maximizes the productivity of our human resources. Survey mailings are conducted twice per month, usually no more than 2 ½ weeks after case closure. A business reply envelope is enclosed for return mail and the Research, Evaluation and Development (R,E&D) staff generates the letters and surveys. The MRC Consumer Consultants or ICC's coordinate the mailing and perform data entry. R, E&D staff analyze the data with input from the Consumer Satisfaction subcommittee

Questionnaires are reviewed for urgent needs or issues by professional staff prior to data entry. This information is immediately forwarded to the MRC Ombudsman for review. Surveys with major issues or needs are verified with the ombudsman who develops a plan of action. When consumer need or issue is supported by information, their case is referred to the Area Office and the Ombudsman facilitates a resolution.

This continuous methodology has several advantages to the random sample method employed in prior years. As noted, the proportion of invalid addresses continues to decrease: 12% in FFY 05; 13% in FFY 04; and 21% in FFY 02. This can be attributable to the shorter period of time between case closure and survey contact. Additionally, the continuous survey method has resulted in excellent state coverage. MRC is continuing to make progress at reducing the number of undeliverable surveys to ensure as many consumers as possible have the opportunity to provide MRC with input.

Response Rate

MRC mailed 5,490 surveys to consumers over the course of FFY 2005 (10/01/04 to 09/30/05). A total of 680 questionnaires were returned as undeliverable (12%). We received 1,209 usable responses representing an overall response rate of 25%. This rate of response is a better than average return for typical mailed surveys with no follow-up of non-responders. Even last year the Consumer Satisfaction Survey response rate was 22.%.

Representation of the Respondent Population

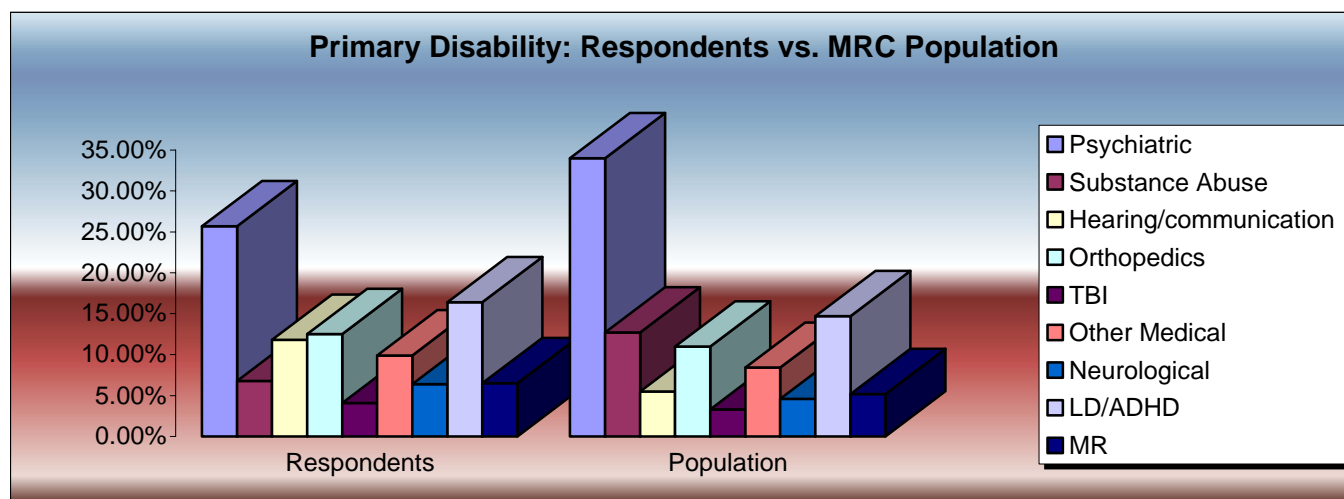
To determine if this survey is representative, this study compares the characteristics of surveyed MRC consumer satisfaction population to the MRC population as a whole, based on established evaluation methods. There are three variables utilized in this study to make comparative judgments:

1. Disability Type
2. Closure Status
3. Region.

The following Table illustrates the differences and similarities between the MRC population as a whole and the group of respondents who answered our satisfaction questionnaire.

Table 1
Respondent vs. MRC Population Characteristics- 2005

Primary Disability	Respondents	Population
Psychiatric	25.70%	34%
Substance Abuse	6.80%	12.70%
Hearing/communication	11.80%	5.50%
Orthopedics	12.50%	11.00%
TBI	4.10%	3.30%
Other Medical	9.90%	8.40%
Neurological	6.40%	4.60%
LD/ADHD	16.40%	14.70%
MR	6.50%	5.20%
Status	Respondents	Population
26	79.80%	63.70%
28	20.20%	35.70%
Region	Respondents	Population
A	33.60%	31.10%
B	34.40%	33.70%
C	31.00%	34.30%
SES	2.10%	0.90%



In terms of disability, the distribution of types of disability is similar in both the survey respondents and MRC population. Notable exceptions are a lesser proportion of consumers with psychiatric, drug and alcohol disabilities and a greater proportion of consumers with hearing impairments in the study group. This is partly true because hearing impairments can frequently be more easily treated (with the provision of a hearing aid) and these consumers are more satisfied and hence more likely to fill out a satisfaction questionnaire.

There are a larger proportion of cases in status 26 (successful closures who are happy with their outcome) among respondents to the survey than we would expect given their proportion in the population, and fewer cases among respondents in status 28 (unsuccessful closures) than we might expect. As we will see, the presence or absence of these two groups can bias our results in a positive or negative direction: 26's lending a positive view and 28's viewing satisfaction negatively.

The geographic spread of survey responses ranges from a low of 1.6% in Sturbridge (19 respondents) to a high of 8.4% in Worcester (101 respondents). All Area Offices are represented in this survey proportionate to the size of the office.

Table 2
Respondents by Area Office

Area Office	Number	Percent
Greenfield	48	3.8
Holyoke	73	6
Pittsfield	50	4.1
Springfield	85	7
Fitchburg	42	3.5
Milford	31	2.6
Sturbridge	19	1.6
Worcester	101	8.4
Natick	43	3.6
Lawrence	42	3.5
Lowell	50	4.1
Salem	50	4.1
Malden	46	3.8
Somerville	53	4.4
Brookline	77	6.4
Downtown	50	4.1
Roxbury	33	2.7
Quincy	62	5.1
Brockton	46	3.8
Fall River	35	2.9
Hyannis	47	3.9
New Bedford	36	3
Plymouth	27	2.2
Taunton	38	3.1
SES	25	2.1
Total	1207	100
Average Response	48	4%

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Research suggests that an overall satisfaction benchmark score in the 80% range is to be considered “very good”. Using this 80% benchmark, the overall MRC satisfaction rating of 82% suggests that the majority of MRC consumers were very satisfied with services and outcomes. Scores on the individual satisfaction items were somewhat lower. However, much of the difference between individual MRC scores and the 80% “ideal” benchmark is due to the status 28 cases, which were unsuccessfully served and far less satisfied than the successfully served status 26 cases.

MRC Experience- This Year and Last

The questionnaire this year was the same as last, including several measures of overall satisfaction and specific measures of consumer choice, opinion of the counselor, satisfaction with various aspects of employment, and opportunities to write in open ended comments, etc. The response rate was higher this year than last, which should increase the reliability of the satisfaction scores this year. The scores, in fact, were higher in almost every case this year by at least one or two percentage points.

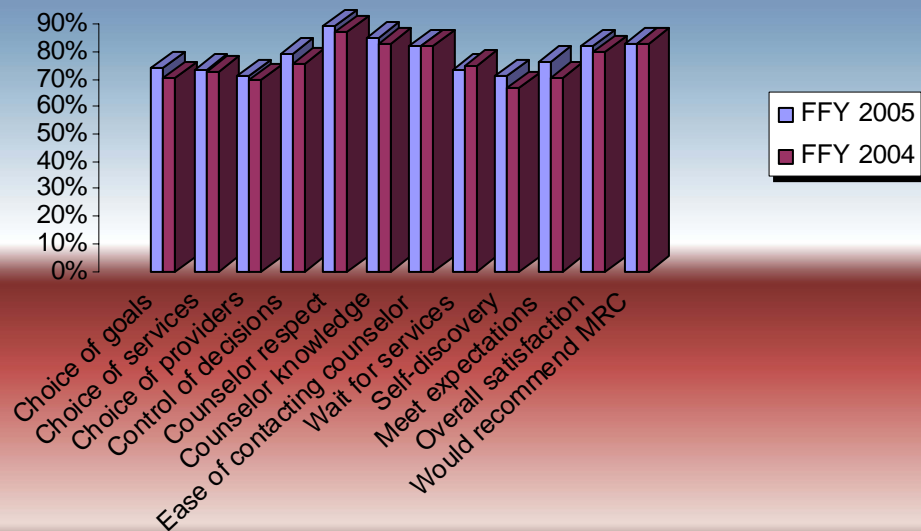
All questions but one (which was slightly reworded) were the same as last year so most comparisons are valid. Overall satisfaction increased by 2.1 percentage points. The proportion of respondents who were satisfied with the choice of goals increased by 4 percentage points, and the proportion who felt MRC met or exceeded their expectations increased by about 6 percentage points. These findings represent a positive trend.

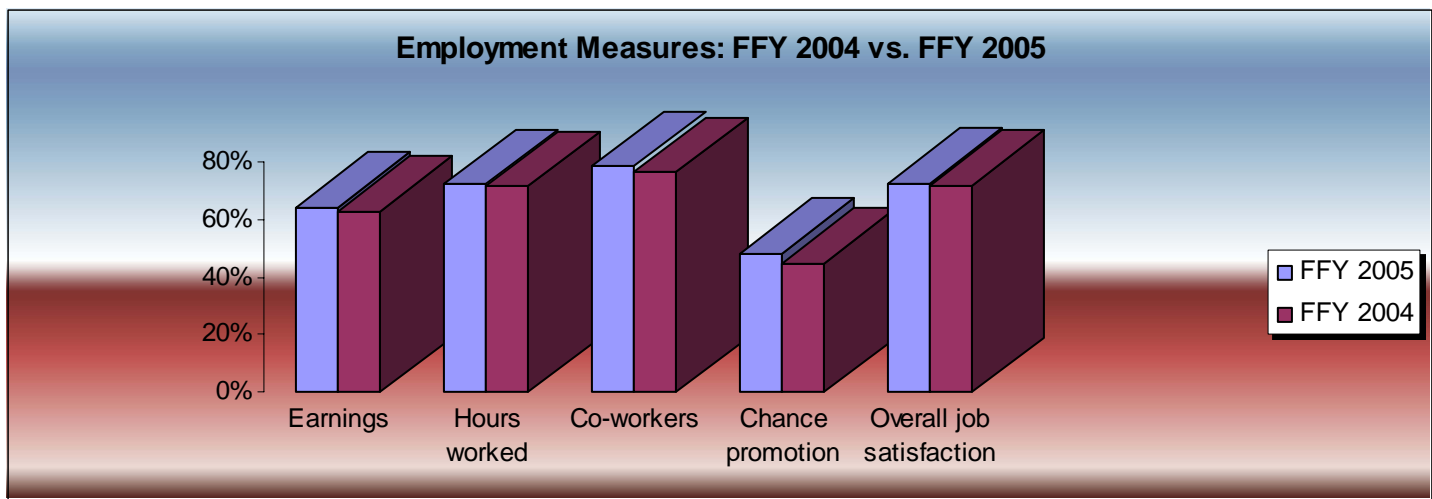
One satisfaction item of note that trended in a negative direction was related to the wait for services. Consumer satisfaction levels decreased by about 1.8 percentage points on this measure. As mentioned previously, consumers reported dissatisfaction both with the wait for services to begin and be approved and the wait for services to be delivered once their case was open, so we should not be quick to interpret this finding.

Table 3
Comparison of FFY 2005 and FFY 2004: Percent Satisfied
2005 Satisfaction Benchmark 80%

Satisfaction Measure	FFY 2005	FFY 2004
Choice of goals	74.6%	70.5%
Choice of services	73.4%	72.8%
Choice of providers	71.2%	70.0%
Control of decisions	79.4%	75.8%
Counselor respect	89.6%	87.6%
Counselor knowledge	85.3%	82.9%
Ease of contacting counselor	82.3%	82.1%
Wait for services	73.8%	75.0%
Self-discovery	71.2%	66.9%
Meet expectations	76.6%	70.8%
Overall satisfaction	82.1%	80.0%
Would recommend MRC	83.0%	83.0%
Employment Measure	FFY 2005	FFY 2004
Earnings	64.3%	63.0%
Hours worked	72.4%	71.7%
Co-workers	78.8%	76.7%
Chance promotion	48.4%	44.9%
Overall job satisfaction	72.7%	72.1%

Satisfaction Measures: FFY 2004 vs. FFY 2005





Expectation of Services

Most respondents agreed that MRC met all or most of their expectations (77%). When examined by outcome status, the respondents whose cases were closed unsuccessfully were far less likely to say that MRC met their expectations (56%) than were those whose cases were closed successfully (81%).

Informed Choice

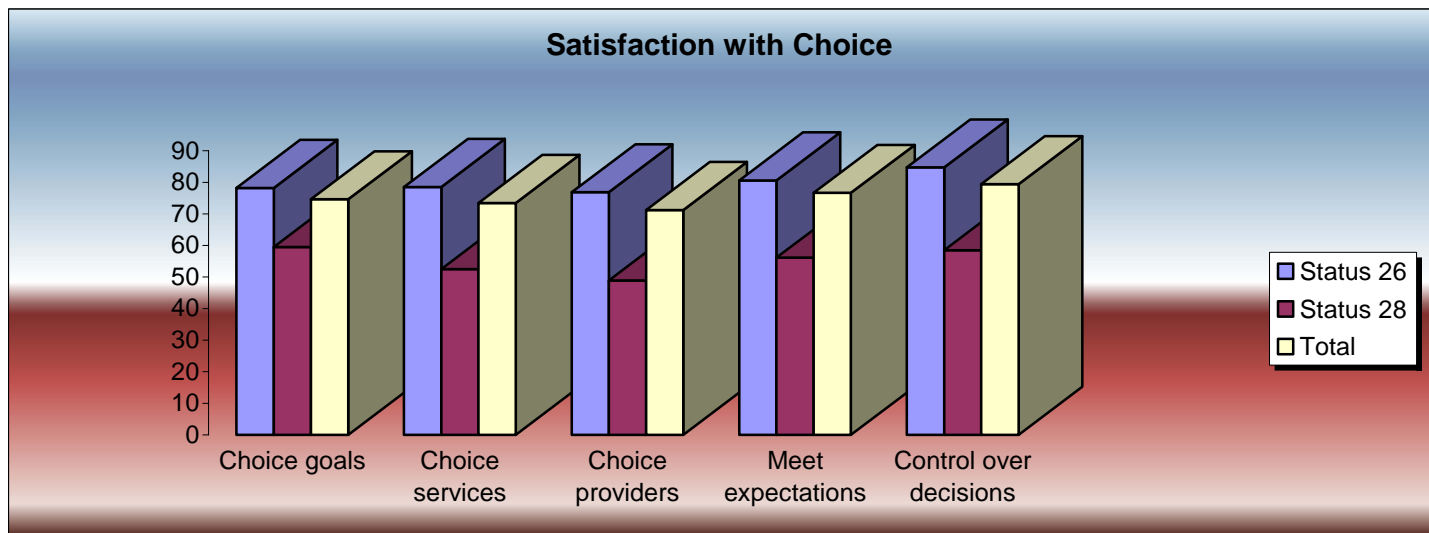
In terms of informed choice, respondents were most satisfied with their choice of vocational goals (75%), their choice of services (73%) and their choice of providers (71%). Once again, those respondents within status 26 (successful closures) were more likely to report being satisfied than those within status 28 (unsuccessful closures).

Consumers who were not successfully rehabilitated were far more likely to be dissatisfied with all measures of informed choice. There was an average difference of 25 percentage points between the satisfaction levels of successfully and unsuccessfully closed cases. However, even when the lower scoring 28's are taken out of the picture, the scores remain low. Less than 80% of the successfully closed cases were satisfied with these aspects of consumer choice, indicating that while the trend is improving over last year, more progress can be made to communicate with consumers to ensure that they feel that their choices and input matters pertaining to their rehabilitation plans. Some open ended comments suggest that a number of respondents believed they were not made aware of all or the variety of services (choices) available to them though the VR program.

Whether or not a respondent felt a degree of control over the decisions that affected his or her case was strongly related to a successful outcome and satisfaction. Nearly 85% of the respondents with cases closed successfully in status 26 were very or somewhat satisfied with the degree of control they had over their rehabilitation process. To the contrary, cases closed unsuccessfully in status 28 appeared to be less satisfied with their control over decision making which may have contributed to the lower satisfaction levels.

Table 4
Consumer Choice by Outcome Status
Percent Very/Somewhat Satisfied

Choice Measure	Status 26	Status 28	Total
Choice goals	78.2	59.5	74.6
Choice services	78.5	52.5	73.4
Choice providers	76.8	48.9	71.2
Meet expectations	80.6	56.1	76.6
Control over decisions	84.7	58.5	79.4

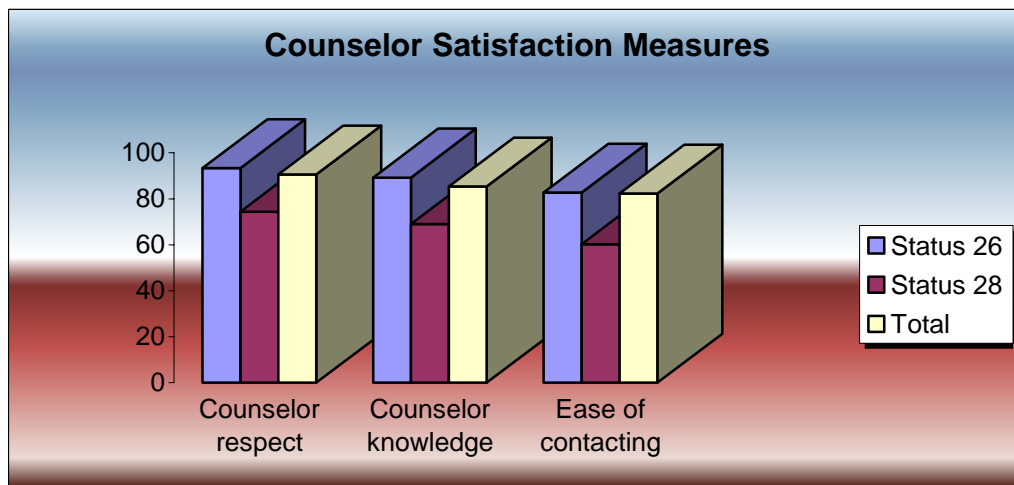


Satisfaction with Counselor

Satisfaction with MRC counselors, as always, is the high point of the Consumer Satisfaction Survey. This aspect of MRC's programs receives the highest satisfaction ratings, both on the closed ended and open ended questions. Here in the closed ended questions, consumers were asked about their counselor's attitude, knowledge and accessibility. Consumers were most satisfied with the way they were treated by their counselor, by their counselor's respect and understanding (89.6%), their counselor's knowledge of disability and employment issues (85.3%), and the ease with which they could contact their counselor (82.3%). Even though the scores of the unsuccessfully closed cases pulled down the average, these were the highest overall satisfaction scores on the survey.

Table 5
Satisfaction with Counselor by Status
Percent Very/Somewhat Satisfied

Counselor Measures	Status 26	Status 28	Total
Counselor respect	93.4	74.4	90.6
Counselor knowledge	89.3	69	85.3
Ease of contacting	82.7	60.3	82.3



Waiting Time for Services

In 2005, MRC operated under an Order of Selection that limited eligibility to the most significantly disabled consumers. For the first two quarters of FFY2005, MRC had a four month waiting period. This waiting period was reduced to 3 months in April of 2005. As a result, we projected that there would be an increase in satisfaction with waiting time; however, this was not represented in the data. This could be attributed to the fact that many of the consumers, whose case was opened before April, 2005 are still receiving services at this time.

In 2005, 74% of the respondents were satisfied with the time they had to wait for services as compared to 75% in 2004. This dissatisfaction with the perceived wait for services was backed up by information from the open ended questions, where there were a number of comments about the waiting time for services once a case was open being too long, and the time for service delivery too short, so that not all their needs are met.

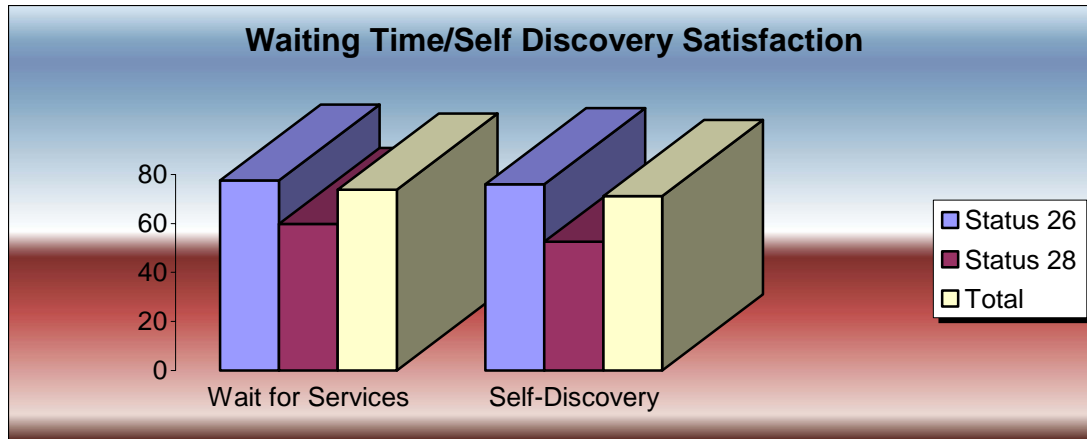
Self Discovery

Approximately two-thirds of the respondents (71.2%) were satisfied with MRC's ability to help them learn more about themselves. Traditionally this category has one of the lowest satisfaction scores in the yearly consumer satisfaction surveys.

Once again, outcome status has a large impact on this question, there being nearly a 25 percentage point difference between successfully and unsuccessfully closed cases. The unsuccessfully closed cases appear not to gain as much benefit from developing a good self-understanding of their preferences, skills, and needs compared to those who successfully complete the program.

Table 6
Waiting for Service and Self-Discovery
Percent Very/Somewhat Satisfied

Satisfaction Measure	Status 26	Status 28	Total
Wait for Services	77.5	59.8	73.8
Self-Discovery	76	52.5	71.2

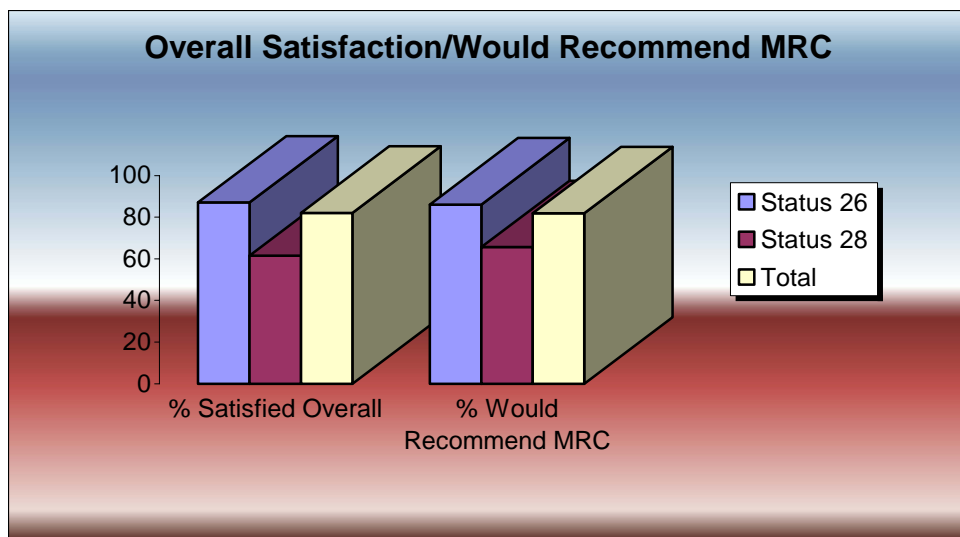


Overall Satisfaction

Overall, 82% of the respondents were satisfied with the services they received and a similar proportion (82%) would recommend MRC to a friend which is a good indicator of the overall kind of services MRC provides. When we look at these responses by outcome status an even stronger pattern emerges. A total of 87.6% of the cases closed in status 26 (successfully closed) were somewhat or very satisfied with MRC services and 86% of this group would recommend MRC to a friend. This is well into the “very good” range for mail satisfaction surveys, and demonstrates that despite the need to continuously improve quality in some areas, in other areas MRC is providing services that are highly satisfactory to consumers.

Table 7
Overall Satisfaction and Would Recommend MRC

Satisfaction Measure	Status 26	Status 28	Total
% Satisfied Overall	87.1	61.6	82.1
% Would Recommend MRC	86.1	65.6	81.9



Satisfaction by Area Office

In FFY 2005, the five Area Offices with the highest levels of consumer satisfaction, as measured by the one summary satisfaction measure (“Overall, how satisfied were you with the services you received from MRC?”) were as follows:

- 1. Fitchburg 95%**
- 2. Roxbury 93%**
- 3. Lowell 90%;**
- 4. Downtown 89%**
- 5. Somerville 88%.**

Only Roxbury was in the 5 offices with the highest scores last year. The lowest scores on this measure in 2005 were Salem, Malden, Sturbridge, Fall River and New Bedford.

Table 8
Percent Very/Somewhat Satisfied by Area Office
Rank Ordered Low to High Satisfaction

Salem Area Office	63.8
Malden Area Office	70
Sturbridge Area Office	70.6
Fall River Area Office	74.3
New Bedford Area Office	77.1
Greenfield Area Office	77.8
Brookline Area Office	79.2
Milford Area Office	79.3
Plymouth Area Office	80
Brockton Area Office	80.4

Lawrence Area Office	80.5
Hyannis Area Office	80.5
Springfield Area Office	81.5
Quincy Area Office	82.5
Natick Area Office	82.9
Pittsfield Area Office	85.1
Holyoke Area Office	85.7
Worcester Area Office	85.9
Taunton Area Office	86.1
Somerville Area Office	88
Downtown Area Office	89.1
Lowell Area Office	89.6
Roxbury Area Office	93.1
Fitchburg Area Office	95.1
Average Satisfaction Score	82.10%

Correlates of Satisfaction

Overall satisfaction, as shown in the table below, is most highly correlated with the items measuring expectations of service, consumer choice (choices of goals, services and providers), evaluations of the counselor, and waiting time for services.

This suggests that the most satisfied consumers would be those whose expectations of MRC were met or surpassed, who felt they were well treated by a knowledgeable counselor, who felt they had a voice in their rehabilitation process and didn't have to wait what seemed like too long for services.

Many other factors seem to contribute to whether a person would recommend a friend to MRC. These factors may or may not be similar to correlates of other measures of satisfaction. Although there were significant correlations between whether a respondent would recommend MRC and many of the satisfaction variables mentioned above, they were of much smaller magnitude. Overall satisfaction with MRC is the better predictor of satisfaction with MRC's programs and services.

Table 9
Correlates of Satisfaction
Pearson Correlation Coefficients

Satisfaction Measure	Overall Satisfaction	Recommend MRC
Meet expectations	.756**	.488**
Choice goals	.647**	.413**
Choice services	.777**	.479**
Choice providers	.715**	.441**
Control over decision	.764**	.530**
Wait for services	.675**	.442**
Counselor respect	.678**	.487**
Counselor knowledge	.767**	.530**

Employment

A total of 73% of the consumer respondents reported that they were working at the time they filled out the survey. This includes 86% of the successfully closed cases in status 26 and 21% of the unsuccessfully closed cases in status 28. A total of 15% of the cases closed as employed reported that they were no longer working at the time of the survey. Remarks in the open ended questions suggest that some jobs became unsatisfactory once the consumer realized how little they offered in salary or benefits. However, some of consumers that were dissatisfied with their jobs (32%) continued to work until they could take the skills they learned at MRC to another, better paying, position. Of course, there are the 77% of the workers who were very or somewhat satisfied with the jobs they found with MRC the first time out. These workers were most satisfied with their co-workers (how they were treated) (84%); the hours they worked (76%); and their earnings (69%). Only half (51%) were satisfied with their chances for promotion. This was the lowest satisfaction score on the survey.

Many respondents wrote in the open ended questions that they wanted continued education or training, but only 8.6% (mostly 28's) were in school at the time of the survey. Nearly a third (29%) of the respondents whose cases were closed unsuccessfully in status 28 and 2% of the successfully closed cases in status 26 were neither working nor looking for work at the time of the survey.

Table 10
Employment Status by Outcome Status

Employment Status	Status 26	Status 28	Total
% working	85.6	21.3	72.6
% looking for work	19.8	27.5	21.3
% in school	7.6	12.7	8.6
% homemakers	11.9	25.4	14.6
% not working not looking	2.4	29.1	7.8

To examine job satisfaction, this study examined all persons who were employed, both who successfully completed their VR program with employment (status 26) and those who dropped out short of achieving this goal (status 28). A small number of this latter group became employed on their own after contact with MRC.

Table 11
Job Satisfaction by Outcome Status for Workers
Percent Very/Somewhat Satisfied

	Status 26	Status 28	Total
Earnings	68.7	54.3	68
Hours worked	76.3	66.7	75.8
Co-workers	83.7	68.2	82.9
Chance promotion	51.7	50	51.7
Overall job satisfaction	77.6	65.2	77

OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS

As in last year's survey, respondents had a chance to provide input about MRC in two open ended questions. The first asked them to write in an explanation as to why they would or would not recommend MRC to a friend.

As we saw in Table 7, a total of 86% of the respondents would recommend MRC to a friend. This agrees with the comments we received. Of the codeable responses (those that spoke of MRC either positively or negatively and were legible to coders) about 83% were positive and 17% were negative.

The positive statements told a story of an agency that offered a unique service to a population that was frequently underserved. MRC not only offered employment services, but also personal support while making decisions about one's life. That's where the importance of the counselor comes in- someone who is knowledgeable about the job market, but who also understands the process of becoming independent for maybe the first time.

Some of the open ended responses suggested that the process to obtain services moves slowly and as a result some of their needs and goals were not completely met. Any respondent to the MRC Consumer Satisfaction Survey that reported a major problem or issue with services was contacted by the MRC Ombudsman before the questionnaire was sent for data input in order to ensure a resolution was obtained. The MRC Ombudsman works closely with the area office staff to identify an appropriate resolution to any significant consumer issues identified through the Consumer Satisfaction Survey process..

The most frequently mentioned benefit of MRC in this first open ended question was its excellent services: employment, training, education, counseling. Respondents felt they were getting a service that wasn't available elsewhere:

- “Workshops were very helpful- resume and career assessment work steps and career services put me in touch with appropriate employers. My counselor kept in touch with me and provided excellent support.”
- “It is (a) very good source for job searching. The support system for finding jobs is excellent and very organized. The counselors are very experienced in helping find jobs.”
- “I appreciate the value, the quality of service I received from MRC. I believe I have been able to be heard. To talk and participate in everything I ever thought about in my MRC office. No need has gone unheard and I know my future is going to be what I want. I want it to be with their help.”
- “Because of their vast knowledge of services. MRC has wonderful services. MRC has wonderful and caring counselors. Our counselor opened the door to all the possibilities.”

The next most frequently mentioned benefit of MRC was the understanding, respect, and caring of the staff and counselors:

- “I worked with counselors in ... to develop a career and education plan. They were extremely helpful, friendly and supportive. They followed my education closely and with great interest. I could not be happier with the assistance I received.”
- “Easy to communicate needs and everyone has a great attitude about helping you. Always understanding and looking to service you’re every need.”
- “All persons I dealt with were compassionate and listened to my concerns”.
- “Absolutely! I feel I was treated with respect and understanding as well as respect and guidance. My counselor was very professional, supportive, and helpful in my return to work. I would have no hesitation referring my friends or clients to MRC.”

Unfortunately authors of critical commentary aren’t as articulate as those respondents with positive messages. Consequently we have less to go on, less of an explanation of why a particular service is unsatisfactory, or why the respondents feel the way they do. As a reason why they would not recommend MRC, most consumers said they did not get the desired results from MRC:

- “I never got the help I really needed.”
- “There were no results with this program or anyone who was associated with this program.”
- “I didn’t find a job as a result of these services.”
- “Counselor who never returned my calls then closed my case without even talking to me, a note or not”.

Some consumers indicated in the open ended questions that they either got fewer services than they needed, or the wrong services for their needs. Some of the open ended comments suggested preferences for attending a specific school

or program that provided specific supports that apparently were not approved or authorized, and as a result, consumers were dissatisfied with this aspect of their experience with MRC.

- “The schools that would have given me that are not approved. I would have been graduating now.”

The survey identified that problems with waiting too long for services were the other most frequently mentioned issues:

- “Services take too long to wait.”
- “It takes too long to get things done.”

When asked if they had any comments to make about their experience with MRC, there were about 575 codeable responses. Of these, about 60% were positive, and about 40% expressed dissatisfaction or unmet needs.

As we saw in the previous question, satisfied respondents most often praised their counselor’s work:

- “You need more counselors like mine. He treated me fairly and respectfully at a time when I needed it and gave me the confidence I needed to put my best foot forward”.
- “MRC was a great experience. It has helped me with my disabilities and gave me the confidence to live alone and find a job on my own.”

However, this wasn’t the case for everybody:

- “I got the feeling my counselor had too many clients to make a difference in assisting me.”

There were many respondents who were satisfied with services and very grateful for all MRC had given them:

- “I was serious about changing my situation MRC helped me in everything they could. They paid for 8 months of school books, etc. I was provided with transportation and financial support and I was given a lot of personal support.”

On the other hand, this year there were some people who were dissatisfied or not completely satisfied with the services they received and expressed a need for more services. Some of them appeared not to understand that their case was closed.

- “I would like to learn more skills.”
- “I did not get a job through MRC but would like their help in getting one.”
- “I would like some help finding a job I would be interested in”

- “I need more hours to support myself and my family.”
- “I think MRC should push vocational training so that your clients could increase their earning potential.”
- “MRC was great with career retraining. Once I got a job I was told my case was closed and I couldn’t get any more services.”

This year we also saw people express dissatisfaction with the waiting time to obtain services and with the length of time available for services suggesting service time was too short in duration:

- “Though very happy, there were some times that I waited a few weeks to get a call back from my original phone call.”
- “Waiting too long for appointment sometime wait for one year and 6 months.”
- “I feel the need to come back but I’m having difficulty reaching my counselor.”
- “I need a job immediately. Too much long time waiting period.”
- “I believe that MRC should listen more to clients needs about what vocational goals would be best.

CONCLUSIONS

- The response rate for the Consumer Satisfaction Survey increased to 25% for FFY 2005 which is an excellent response rate for a mailed survey and three percentage points higher than last year. The proportion of undeliverable surveys was down to 12%, its lowest level yet.
- The level of overall satisfaction in FFY 2005 increased to 82% from 80% in FFY 2004. This overall satisfaction score exceeds the 80% benchmark research standard for “very satisfied” consumers. .
- The survey contains two open-ended questions, one asking the reason a respondent would or would not recommend MRC to a friend, and the other asking for comments about the respondent’s MRC experience. Respectively, 80% and 60% of the respondents had very positive things to say about their counselors, their services, the program, the impact MRC had on their lives. However, from a continuous quality improvement point of view, this still leaves 20% and 40% of the respondents indicating that services can be improved.
- Consumers continue to express their dissatisfaction with waiting time required to become eligible for services, the time it took to deliver and receive services, and the time it took to contact their counselor. Some consumers indicated that the time available for receiving services was not long enough to accommodate their needs or learning styles, and consequently some of their needs were not met.
- Counselors continue to be the cornerstone of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) process; the source of support, understanding and skill. The VR Counselors always were, and they continue to be, MRC’s greatest asset. Nearly 90% of the respondents in FFY 2005 were very or somewhat satisfied with the respect and understanding of their counselor. But some improvements can be made in the area of returning phone calls in a timely fashion to make appointments, providing a sufficient opportunity to discuss desired goals and proposed services.
- People come to MRC seeking assistance to live and work independently in their respective communities through improving their skills or earning power. MRC met or exceeded the expectations of three out of four consumers. This was an increase over last year, but it still leaves room to improve service delivery for the one out of four respondents who were disappointed, whether this stems from misconceptions about MRC’s mission or failure of the service system to meet their needs.
- A respondent’s perception about informed choice was closely linked to their overall satisfaction with the agency. Those successfully closed cases who felt that they had a greater degree of control over the choice and implementation of their vocational goal were more likely to be very satisfied overall and with MRC’s programs and services.
- 85.6% of the successfully closed cases (status 26) were working at the time of the survey. Nearly 1 out of 5 were looking for a job. This suggests that the job market is such that not everyone can get the “perfect” job right away, even with appropriate education and training. However, it is good to point out that this is the exception, not the rule.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is noted in this report over the years that it seems like there are two populations, one happy and satisfied with MRC and the other not. This year there was talk about under employment among both the successful and unsuccessful consumers. However, we should not rush to judge counselor performance because of unfavorable labor market conditions. Labor market conditions may include many high paid positions requiring high levels of education and experience. With a good match, respondents may be eligible for these jobs. Alternatively, labor market conditions may be dominated by low paying, low skill jobs. To gain further insight on this issue, we can invite several of the Placement Specialists from both the smallest and largest area offices to talk to the SRC about the types of jobs that are now most available to consumers, and whether consumers generally meet these qualifications. MRC should take steps to ensure that job placements continue to be high quality and meet the salary and benefit needs of our consumers. The development of the electronic prevailing wage tool along with additional counselor training on competitive wages will help to maximize economic benefits available in the work place.
- The many facets of satisfaction all add up to the overall experience and their sheer number can be overwhelming. The Committee suggests that MRC take one area that could be improved upon to, such as waiting time for services, and concentrate on improving this aspect of the consumer's experience. The first change to be accomplished was the development of the new "time in status" rules for counselors. These rules govern the length of time a consumer can be placed in any one status, and will hopefully do away with long waiting periods before and after eligibility. Case managers will review counselors performance periodically to ensure their compliance. New coding conventions on MRCIS will help ensure compliance with the new procedures.
- Information from the Consumer Satisfaction Survey is being used by MRC to help manage its Area Offices. Directors are interested in how they are doing from the point of view of the consumer. Ad hoc reports feed satisfaction information back to the field for the purpose of improving programs and services. Currently two measures of consumer satisfaction are being used to guide the performance of the Area Offices- whether or not the respondent would recommend MRC, and how satisfied the respondent is overall with their MRC experience. The Committee suggests that we consider researching additional satisfaction measures and methodologies to further enhance our consumer satisfaction process.
- The Subcommittee on Consumer Satisfaction thanks Zary Amirhosseini for her hard work as former chair of the Subcommittee and asks the SRC for support in recruiting a new chair for the coming year, as well as new members.

Appendix
FFY 2005 Consumer Satisfaction Letter and Survey

«Issue_Date»

«FirstName» «LastName»

«Address1» «Address2»

«xCity», «xState» «PostalCode»

Dear «FirstName»:

This letter comes to you from the State Rehabilitation Council of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC). The purpose of the Rehabilitation Council is to insure the personal and vocational growth of persons with disabilities by ensuring their access to MRC Services and collaborating with MRC on the planning and delivery of programs and policies.

On behalf of the Rehabilitation Council, which consists of a legally established group of your peers and their advocates, family and friends, I would like to ask you to respond to the enclosed questionnaire regarding your experiences as a consumer of MRC's services. The Rehabilitation Council is sponsoring this survey to make sure MRC takes the real needs of people with disabilities into account when making decisions about programs and services to help people get jobs. They would like you to let them know how satisfied you were with your experience with MRC.

We hope you will take a few minutes to complete the questionnaire and return it to our Research and Development Unit in the next 3 weeks. A self-addressed, postage paid envelope has been enclosed for your convenience. Your participation is voluntary, but we hope to hear from everyone, regardless of the nature of your experience with MRC. The questionnaire is anonymous, so you need not put your name on it before you return it directly to our Research and Development Unit. No one will be able to associate your name with your response.

If you have any questions about the survey, or need personal help in filling it out (due to your language or type of disability, for example), please call 1-800-245-6543 and ask for Mary Esther Rohman. Or you can leave a message for the Research and Development Unit, and someone will call you back.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Zary Amirhosseini

Vice Chairperson of the Rehabilitation Council

«ClientCode»

CONSUMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

Please circle your answer where appropriate.

1. In general, did your MRC experience meet your expectations? Would you say MRC:

Met all of my expectations.....5
Met most of my expectations.....4
No opinion3

Met some of my expectations2
 Met none of my expectations1

Rating scale: 5-Very Satisfied, 4-Somewhat Satisfied, 3-No Opinion, 2-Somewhat Dissatisfied, 1-Very Dissatisfied

2. How satisfied were you with the following:

a) Your choice of a vocational goal?	5	4	3	2	1
b) The choice of services that were available?	5	4	3	2	1
c) The choice of service providers (i.e. job coach, other agencies to which you were referred.)	5	4	3	2	1

3. How satisfied were you with the following:

a) Your MRC counselor's respect and understanding.	5	4	3	2	1
b) Your MRC counselor's knowledge of what to do.	5	4	3	2	1
c) Your control of and involvement in plans and decisions regarding your case.	5	4	3	2	1
d) MRC's ability to help you learn more about yourself.	5	4	3	2	1
e) Ease of contacting your counselor.	5	4	3	2	1
f) Waiting time for services.	5	4	3	2	1

4. Would you tell your friends with disabilities to go to MRC for help? Yes ☐ No ☐

Why or why not? _____

«ClientCode»

5. Are you currently:

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| a) working | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) looking for a job | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) in school | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) homemaking | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e) volunteering | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f) not working, not looking for a job | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |

Rating scale: 5-Very Satisfied, 4-Somewhat Satisfied, 3-No Opinion, 2-Somewhat Dissatisfied, 1-Very Dissatisfied

6. How satisfied are you with the following things about your job?

a) earnings (pay)	5	4	3	2	1
b) number of hours worked	5	4	3	2	1
c) how your co-workers treat you	5	4	3	2	1
d) opportunity to move up (promotion)	5	4	3	2	1
e) overall satisfaction with job	5	4	3	2	1

7. Overall, how satisfied were you with the MRC services you received?

Satisfaction with MRC services	5	4	3	2	1
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8. Any other comments you would like to make about your MRC experience?

Thank you for your cooperation.

Please use the enclosed envelope to return this questionnaire to:

Research & Development Department

Consumer Satisfaction Survey
Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission
27 Wormwood St.
Boston, MA 02210-1616

«ClientCode»